

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 SSO-00 SS-15 USIE-00 INRE-00
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 153680

FOR AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, VT, SA, SY, FR

SUBJECT: VATICAN VIEWS ON LEBANON

REFS: (A) ROME 10583, (B) BEIRUT 3129

1. YOU MAY DRAW FULLY ON BEIRUT'S 3129 IN RESPONDING TO
SILVESTRINI'S APPROACH ABOUT THE LEBANESE SITUATION, WHILE
OMITTING ANY REFERENCE TO FYI PARAGRAPH RE APOSTOLIC
NUNCIO. IN DRAWING ON BEIRUT'S EXCELLENT SUMMATION, YOU
SHOULD PUT YOUR PRESENTATION WITHIN THE FOLLOWING
SUGGESTED FRAMEWORK:

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2. WE WELCOME THIS OPPORTUNITY, AS WE DID ON SEVERAL
OCCASIONS LAST YEAR, TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON LEBANON. WE ARE
PLEASED THAT THE VATICAN CONTINUES TO INTEREST ITSELF IN
IMPROVING THE SITUATION IN LEBANON AND WE WILL BE INTERESTED
IN THE RESULTS OF ITS INITIATIVES WITH SAUDI ARABIA, SYRIA
AND FRANCE.

3. WE WOULD BE PLEASED IF A POLITICAL DIALOGUE AMONG THE VARIOUS FACTIONS IN LEBANON COULD COMMENCE. OUR EMBASSY IN BEIRUT HAS BEEN ENCOURAGING THE RESUMPTION OF SUCH TALKS EVEN ON A LIMITED SCALE AND EVEN BETWEEN LEADERS WHO DO NOT NECESSARILY COMMAND A BROAD FOLLOWING. AS BEIRUT EXPLAINED,

AMONG THE PROBLEMS THAT HAVE TO BE OVERCOME IS THE ABSENCE OF SPOKESMEN FOR CERTAIN COMMUNITIES, PARTICULARLY THE SUNNI MUSLIMS, WHO HAVE A WIDELY ACCEPTED POPULAR MANDATE. THE CHRISTIAN MARONITE LEADERS, ON THE OTHER HAND, EMERGED FROM THE CONFLICT SENSING THAT THEY HAD ACHIEVED A GREAT DEAL, BUT THEY HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY UNBENDING AND UNCOMPROMISING IN THEIR ATTITUDES SINCE THEN. THEY HAVE NOT ACCEPTED THE CENTRAL ROLE OF PRESIDENT SARKIS IN THE PROCESS OF ENCOURAGING RECONCILIATION AND AN EVENTUAL POLITICAL CONSENSUS AMONG THE PARTIES. IN FACT, THE CHRISTIAN MARONITE LEADERSHIP REPRESENTED IN THE "LEBANESE FRONT" FREQUENTLY CHALLENGES SARKIS OR CRITICIZES HIS EFFORTS TO RESTORE SECURITY TO THE COUNTRY.

4. ANY POLITICAL CONSENSUS AMONG THE LEBANESE THEMSELVES WILL HAVE TO INCLUDE AN UNDERSTANDING ON THE FUTURE ROLE OF THE PALESTINIANS; AND ANY LEBANESE UNDERSTANDING WILL IN TURN REQUIRE THE FULLEST SUPPORT OF KEY OUTSIDE STATES SUCH AS SYRIA, SAUDI ARABIA, AND EGYPT. OBVIOUSLY, SUCH
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AN UNDERSTANDING WILL TAKE TIME TO DEVELOP.

5. SUPPLEMENTING BEIRUT'S POINTS, EXPLAIN THAT THE SAUDIS HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO ADVANCE LARGE SUMS OF MONEY TO THE LEBANESE IN THE ABSENCE OF PROGRESS TOWARDS A POLITICAL CONSENSUS. SARKIS ON THE OTHER HAND BELIEVES THAT SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS MUST BE MADE IN ECONOMIC RECOVERY, AND IN THE ATTAINMENT OF A SENSE OF NORMALITY IN LEBANESE LIFE, BEFORE THE LEBANESE FACTIONS WILL BE PREPARED TO BEGIN SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS ON A POLITICAL CONSENSUS.

6. OUR VIEW REMAINS THAT ALL INTERESTED OUTSIDERS SHOULD SUPPORT FIRMLY THE CENTRAL AND MODERATING ROLE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT OF SARKIS. THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT REPRESENTS THE FORCES WISHING TO KEEP THE COUNTRY UNIFIED AND UNPARTITIONED. THE VATICAN, IF IT AGREES WITH THIS VIEW, MIGHT CONSIDER USING ITS INFLUENCE WITH THE CHRISTIAN RIGHTIST LEADERS TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO GIVE HIM THEIR SUPPORT INSTEAD OF CHALLENGING HIM, WHICH ONLY WEAKENS HIS INTERNAL NEGOTIATING POSTURE, PARTICULARLY VIS-A-VIS THE PALESTINIANS, AND WHICH INTERFERES WITH HIS

EFFORTS TO RECONSTITUTE A NATIONAL RPT NATIONAL ARMY. CHRISTOPHER.

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